

“On this day, prescribed by law and marked by ceremony, we celebrate the durable wisdom of our Constitution, and recall the deep commitments that unite our country,” President George W. Bush said after taking the oath of office for a second time. The Jan. 20 inauguration ceremony was the culmination of year-long planning by members of the Joint Task Force-Armed Forces Inaugural Committee, which planned ceremonial portions of the 10-day event.



Celebrating Freedom, Honoring Service

Airmen participate in nation’s most prestigious ceremony

by Master Sgt. Jim Varhegyi

As George Washington made his way to New York City’s Federal Hall to be sworn in as our nation’s first president April 30, 1789, Revolutionary War veterans marched by his side. Two hundred sixteen years and 43 presidents later, the military has played an integral role in every presidential inauguration.

For the 55th presidential inauguration, more than 5,000 Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen converged in Washington, D.C., to support the swearing in of George W. Bush for his second term. Servicemembers played many diverse roles. They formed a cordon lining the 1.6-mile parade route from Capitol Hill to the White House. Others marched in the parade and many provided honor guard services and musical tributes during the various balls and galas during the 10-day celebration.

As a member of the Joint Task Force-Armed Forces Inaugural Committee — a core group of 700 servicemembers — Master Sgt. John Martella turned over his ground safety manager responsibilities for the day

by Tech. Sgt. Cherie Thurlby

and stepped in as president. The 21-year Air Force veteran role-played the former President George H.W. Bush during an inaugural practice session just before the main event in January.

“As a dad myself I tried to imagine what it would be like to be on the swearing-in platform and watch one of my children be sworn in as President of the United States,” said Sergeant Martella who served as leader for the 21-person role-player team.

Like Sergeant Martella, the task force had been planning inaugural activities for a year before the president stepped on the Capitol Hill platform to take the oath of office. Task force members coordinated all military ceremonial support of the inaugural events, including music, marching bands, color guards, ushers, firing details and salute batteries.

Whether Airmen worked behind the scenes or were thrust into the spotlight, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Gerald Murray said on inauguration day, “To be part of the inauguration, swearing in and the parade — there couldn’t be anything greater for our Airmen.”



One of the many roles Airmen fulfilled during inauguration events included role-playing during rehearsals in early January. Master Sgt. John Martella wears the name of former President George H.W. Bush. “Being behind the scenes gave me a great appreciation of all the logistics and planning that goes into putting a presidential inauguration together,” the sergeant said.

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by Tech. Sgt. Cherie Thurlby



by Staff Sgt. Jennifer Gangemi



No detail is too small for U.S. Air Force Honor Guard member Airman 1st Class Joshua Gaule (top left). He was tasked to iron the more than 146 campaign streamers in preparation for the parade. This detail is usually handled by injured Airmen who aren't able to perform day-to-day Honor Guard duties.

Lead drum major (above) for the U.S. Air Force Band, Chief Master Sgt. Edward Teleky, leads the marching unit down Pennsylvania Avenue during the parade. This was the chief's second time leading the band during an inauguration.

by Staff Sgt. Matthew Hannen



Tech. Sgt. Lori Lambert welcomed the chance to work as a horse team controller to help Caisson Platoon 1st of the 3rd Infantry, The Old Guard, from Fort Myer, Va., coordinate horse units for the parade. This horse-owner from Barksdale Air Force Base, La., volunteered to work on the Joint Task Force-Armed Forces Inaugural Committee. Her team worked with more than 260 horses of various breeds.

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by Tech. Sgt. Kevin Gruenwald



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Tech. Sgt. Bradley Bennett (top), tenor vocalist with the Air Force Band's Singing Sergeants, is the only Air Force active-duty soloist to have sung the national anthem during a presidential inauguration. "It's a tremendous honor and it's very humbling," said the Kent, Ohio, native. Sergeant Bennett comes from a family of musicians and started singing at age 7. Senior Airman Brian Hiatt, from Yokota Air Base, Japan, holds the door for the University of Texas Longhorn Band members (left) as they escape the cold for a few minutes prior to marching in the inauguration parade.

(From right to left) Maj. Darren Berry, Tech. Sgt. Paul Coupaud and Navy Lt. Timothy Nosal, public affairs representatives for Joint Task Force-Armed Forces Inauguration Committee, track personnel during an exercise in early January. More than 5,000 servicemembers supported the celebration.

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